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AUTHOR Vida, Louisa Kramer
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ABSTRACT

Following a brief discussion of the value of poetry for gifted children, this paper outlines activities in a poetry unit for gifted children of middle school age. Addressed directly to students, the unit is divided into the following sections: (1) a list of behavioral objectives, which relate to responding to poetry, understanding poetic conventions, and writing poetry; (2) a test of students' knowledge about poetry, designed to be used as both a pretest and a posttest; (3) a list of ten activities involving reacting to the ideas in specific poems: (4) a list of 30 activities involving responding to the language in specific poems: (5) a list of six poetry writing activities: and (6) a description of a culminating activity in which the class creates a class poetry book. The paper also includes a list of poems to be read in the unit and a bibliography of poetry anthologies and books about English instruction. (GT)

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Poetry Activities for Gifted Middle School Age Children

Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Regional Conference of IRA (5th, Nashville, TN, February 6-9, 1980)

Louisa Kramer Vida
Reading Specialist
Long Beach (NY) City School District

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Because a gifted child is more deeply affected by stimuli than an average child is, poetry exposes him to diverse ways of reaching his potential. It fosters profound creativity and leads to sensitivity to problems. It also promotes intense curiosity, a great fluency of ideas, the concepts of flexibility and originality, and an awareness of imaginative descriptive writing. Poetry, thus, helps a child enter the world of fantasy. It emphasizes divergent thinking and helps him develop his self-concept and an openness to new experiences (Huck & Kuhn, 1968).

Therefore, poetry broadens and intensifies a gifted reader's life. It illuminates, clarifies, and deepens everyday experiences; and it develops a whole new way of seeing the world. Poetry appeals to both thoughts and feelings, and satisfies a gifted child's natural response to rhythm, for gifted children are intrigued with the sound of language and enjoy unusual combinations of words. Therefore, the sensory images found in poetry reflect the way they explore their world (Huck & Kuhn, 1968).

To recapture or intensify the memory of a beautiful experience is one of the purposes of poetry. It helps a gifted child recapture the beauty of a scene or increase his sensitivity to an idea or a mood. Poetry thus instills in the gifted child an emotional response to the environment, to an event, or to a universal phenomenon. It helps develop taste and a respect for language, as it shows the gifted child his unique self-potentialities (Huck & Kuhn, 1968).

Poetry thus builds a gifted child's confidence in his reading ability, and develops his language, his critical, and his analytical skills. As poetry is meant to be read for enjoyment, it subconsciously makes a child want to read. Thus, it develops his interest. It also makes him aware of the influence of language on behavior and shows him that words can change from time to time, from place to place, and from situation to situation (Huck & Kuhn, 1968).

But, most of all, poetry fosters creativity, for it teaches sensitivity to

detail and perception of unique combinations of common relationships. Through poetry, a child can see and express the uncommon; can develop the purpose, persistence, motivation, attention and concentration to create; and can develop the self discipline to redraft. Poetry thus enhances a child's self confidence in his ability to express his fluency of ideas, for, in the process of teaching poetry, the child's teacher rewards his originality and dares the gifted child to be as "different" as he can be (Fliegler, 1961).

The following poetry contract was designed to be used by a group of gifted middle school age children. It is part of a children's literature program that encompasses the disciplines of realistic fiction, biography, drama, and poetry. This particular aspect of the program is designed to last for approximately 20 school days. During that time all of the objectives will be assigned to each student, for although many are cognitive in nature, they do contain aesthetic and affective attributes. A bibliography composed of a teacher compiled poetry file and a group oriented culminating activity are also included in this article.

POETRY LAP

Goal: Poetry is the most condensed and concentrated literary way of allowing us, through our imaginations, to live more fully, more deeply, and with greater awareness. In this LAP you will find out that poetry need not teach a lesson and must not always be beautiful, but, if we are open to it, it will always widen and sharpen our contacts with experiential existence.

Behavioral Objectives

By the end of the unit:

1. You will be able to state the main idea in a poem and explain how the poet made his meaning clear.
2. You will be able to recognize figural language and restate its meaning in your own words.
3. You will be able to demonstrate your awareness of the sensual imagery of poetry by selecting a poem and explaining how it has appealed to one of your senses.
4. You will be able to demonstrate that you can recognize and respond to the rhythm used by poets to create a desired mood.
5. You will be able to explain why you like a particular poem.
6. You will be able to write a haiku, a limerick, a cinquaine, and a skeletal poem.
7. You will be able to use sensory images, figural language, and good rhythm to write a poem of your own.

Pre-test Directions: This test is designed to evaluate how much knowledge you already have about poetry. Answer the questions as well as you can, but do not feel pressured to "get 100%" !

To answer the following questions use poems from the poetry file or from one of the poetry books in the back of the room.

1. Pick a poem and state in one sentence what this poem is all about. What words related this main idea to you?
2. Write a simile. Explain it in everyday language.
3. Write a metaphor. Explain it in everyday language.
4. Give an example of personification. Explain it in everyday language.
5. List one example of onomatopoeia.
6. Write an alliterative sentence.
7. Pick a poem and diagram, draw, or explain its rhythm in words.
8. Pick a poem and tell me why you like it.
9. Write a haiku.
10. Write a cinquaine.
11. Write a skeletal poem.
12. Write a limerick.
13. Write a rhythmical rhymed or free verse type of poem. Include in it some sensory images and/or some figural language.

Use the same test for the post-test.

Post-test Directions: This test is designed to evaluate how much knowledge you have gained about poetry. Answer the questions as well as you can. Ninety percent correct is acceptable.

Part 1 - Ideas in Poems

A = Activity
R = Reporting Method

Do 9 of the following.

1. A. Read the haiku and the poem November Night.
   R. Draw a picture that illustrates what these poems say or how they make you feel.

2. A. Read the poems Hot Spot and Sunning.
   R. Write a short paragraph describing your own experience with a beloved pet.

3. A. Read the poems Let the Rain ... and I Meant To Do My Work Today.
   R. Copy one of the poems and around it draw an appropriate border.

4. A. Read the poems Habits of the Hippopotamus, The Lama, Hallowe'en and Jim.
   R. Keep reading these poems to different people until you find someone who laughs when you read them. Give the poems to this person and tell him to do what you did and pass them on.

5. A. Read the poems What Makes A Poem?, Poems, and Poetry.
   R. Write your own definition of poetry.

6. A. Read the poem Song #2.
   R. On tape, record some music to express the meaning of each of the poem's stanzas.

7. A. Read the poem He clasps ...
   R. Draw a before picture and an after picture.

8. A. Read the poem Song. How does the poet define love?
   R. Write your own poem. In it define what courage, loneliness, home, or friendship mean.

9. A. Read "I" Says the Poem.
   R. Define yourself and at the end add what you need to be really you.

10. A. Read Solomon Grundy.
    R. Explain the 2 levels of time sequencing in this poem. What do the last lines mean?

11. A. Read the poem The Fish with the Deep Sea Smile.
    R. Write a moral for this poem.

12. A. Read the poem O What Is That Sound.
    R. Rewrite the poem in the form of a dialogue. Label the husband's and the wife's lines as if they were parts in a play.

13. A. Read The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver.
    R. Explain the plot. Describe the characters and their feelings toward each other.

Part 2 - The Language of Poetry

A= Activity
R= Reporting Method

Do 25 of the following.

1. A. Read the poem Columbus.
   R. Read about Columbus in the encyclopedia. Compare or contrast the language in the poem and in the encyclopedia article. What is the same and/or different about the language?

2. A. Read the poem Old Ships.
   R. Illustrate your favorite line from this poem.

3. A. Read the poems Hiawatha, Rain Sizes, The Wind and Anthony and Cleopatra.
   R. For each poem, to which of our senses does the poet appeal? Use words from the poem to support your answer.

4. A. Read the poem Thunder Dragon. Take note of all of the words related to sound.
   R. List all of the words you might use to describe the sound of a fire or the rain.

5. A. Read the poem April.
   R. Write a poem or draw a picture about your favorite month and what it means to you.

6. A. Read the poem John Henry.
   R. Sing a folk ballad or a folk song to the class, or play a record of the song.

7. A. Read the poem Crows.
   R. Decide which lines you could illustrate. Make the illustrations and copy the lines at the bottom of each illustration.

8. A. Read the poem Seal.
   R. Tape background music that is appropriate for the language of the poem. Play the tape softly while you read the poem out loud to a friend.

9. A. Read the poem An Indian Summer Day on the Prairie.
   R. Write your own poem in which you describe one particular day in your life.

10. A. Read the poem Water Front Streets and Dreams.
    R. Compare the 2 poems' language.

11. A. Read the poem Pale Moon.
    R. Copy this poem and send it to a friend who does not live in New York City. Underline 5 words that are "really New York".

12. A. Read the poem Theme in Yellow.
    R. Draw and color what the poem makes you see.

13. A. Pick a poem.
    R. List the rhyming words (if any), the words that have a musical sound, and the words that create images.

14. A. Listen to the tape wh ile you read the poem Silver.
    R. Write your own poem on a little lost pet. Repeat the word "lost".

15. A. Read the poem Gypsies. Reread aloud the words that create the images.
    R. Pick a topic. List all the images you can think of related to your topic.

16. A. Read the poem Lone Dog.
    R. Listen to a recording of that poem. Decide whether or not the voice has helped bring out the rhythm of the poem.

17. A. Read the poem The Bugle Song.
    R. Bring to class another poem rich in music. Read it to the class.

18. A. Read the poem Sea Fever.
    R. Beat out the rhythm. What words are emphasized?

19. A. Read The Cloud, An Indian Summer Day on the Prairie, and Autumn Fancies.
    R. List the comparisons in each of the poems.

20. A. Read A Commercial for Spring.
    R. Write a poem about your favorite season. Paste the poem on a poster and illustrate the poster with appropriate words cut out from magazines.

21. A. Read Catalog.
    R. Find several poems about your favorite animal. Enumerate the ten best words that help you visualize this animal.

22. A. Read Thumbprint.
    R. Sign your name and make a thumbprint on a piece of paper.

23. A. Read Wind Wolves, Rolling Clouds, Song of Sherwood, and Leisure.
    R. Answer the questions that follow them.

24. A. Read Sea Fever.
    R. Write down the name of the place or the time that you"just have to return to!"

25. A. Read I Was Born Forty Years Ago.
    R. Rewrite the poem as prose.

26. A. Read The White Horse.
    R. Find pictures to illustrate this poem.

27. A. Read The Magnifying Glass.
    R. Pretend that you are looking through a magnifying glass. Describe what you see.

28. A. Read Miracles.
    R. List all of the feelings this poem aroused in you.

29. A. Read The Road Not Taken.
    R. Describe the road that Frost did not take.

30. A. Read Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening.
    R. Select background music. Play it softly while you read this poem to someone.

Part 3 - Writing Poetry

A = Activity
R = Reporting Method

Do all of the following.

1. A. Read the poem Tuesday.
   R. Write and illustrate your own free verse poem.

2. A. Read the haiku.
   R. Make up a sentence that describes a single detail. Then turn your sentence into a haiku: in exactly 17 syllables, write a 3 line poem with 5 syllables in the first line, 7 syllables in the second line and 5 syllables in the third line.

3. A. Read November Night, Eyes, and Moon.
   R. Write your own cinquaine. Choose one noun for the first line. Choose 2 adjectives to describe the noun for your second line. For your third line, choose 3 verbs to express an action or actions of the first word. Choose 4 words to express feeling for your fourth line. For the fifth line, either repeat the first line or choose a synonym for it.

4. A. Read the limericks.
   R. Using the models write your own 5 line limerick.

5. A. Fill in the missing words: I am _____
   I feel sorry when _____

   Yesterday I was _____
   Tomorrow I'll be _____
   But today I am _____

   Being me is _____
   Because _____
   R. Send the completed poems to a secret friend.

6. A. Read Betty Botter.
   R. Repeating the beginning sound in two or more words in a sentence is called alliteration. Write an alliterative sentence about each of the following: the sun, a bicycle, an airplane, and a dog.

For this unit's culminating activity we would like to create a class poetry book.

Create a super great poem. Then copy it over neatly on a piece of 8½" x 11" typing paper. Sign it at the bottom and illustrate the borders around the poem. Use the 3 hole punch to put 3 holes into the paper on the left hand side of the page when the 11" side is vertical. Put your poem into the poetry binder aphabetically according to the title of your poem.

POETRY FILE BIBLIOGRAPHY
(alphabetically by first line or title)

"A Commercial for Spring"- Eve Merriam
"An Indian Summer Day on the Prairie"- Vachel Lindsey
from Anthony and Cleopatra - William Shakespeare
"April"- Marcia Masters
"Autumn Fancies"- anonymous

"Betty Botter" - author unknown
"Break, Break, Break" - Alfred, Lord Tennyson

"Catalogue" - Rosalie Moore
"Columbus" - Joaquin Miller
"Crows" - David McCord

"Design" - Robert Frost

"Eyes" - anonymous

"Gypsies" - Rachel Field

"Habits of the Hippopotamus" - Arthur Gruterman
"Halloween" - Eve Merriam
from"Hiawatha"- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
"hist whist" - e.e. cummings
"Hot Spot" - anonymous

"I Meant To Do My Work Today" - Richard Le Gallienne
" 'I', Says the Poem" - Eve Merriam
"I Was Born Forty Years Ago" - Stuart Gloete

from "Jim" - Hilaire Belloc
"John Henry" - anonymous

"Leisure" - William Henry Davies
"Let the rain kiss you ..." - anonymous
"Limericks" - Edward Lear and R.J.P. Hewison
"Lone Dog" - Irene Rutherford McLeod

"Miracles" - Walt Whitman
"Moon" - anonymous

"November Night" - anonymous

"Old Ships" - David Morton
"O What Is That Sound" - W.H. Auden

"Pale moon doth rain ..." - anonymous
"Poems" - Hilda Conkling
"Poetry" - Eleanor Farjeon

"Rain Sizes" - John Ciardi
"Rolling Clouds" - Carl Sandburg

"Sea Fever" - John Masefield
"Seal" - William Jay Smith

"Silver" - Walter de la Mare
"Solomon Grundy" - Frederick Winsor
"Song" - Rachel Field
"Song" - anonymous
"Song of Sherwood" - Alfred Noyes
"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" - Robert Frost
"Sunning" - anonymous

"The Ballad of the Harp Weaver" - anonymous
"The Bugle Song" - Alfred, Lord Tennyson
"The Cloud" - Percy Bysshe Shelley
"The Fish with the Deep Sea Smile" - Margaret Wise Brown
"The Lama" - Ogden Nash
"The Magnifying Glass" - Walter de la Mare
"Theme in Yellow" - Carl Sandburg
"The Road Not Taken" - Robert Frost
"The White Horse" - Tu Fu
from "The Wind" -Robert Louis Stevenson
"Thumbprint" - Eve Merriam
"Thunder Dragon" - Harry Behn
"Thunder Pools" - Robert P. Tristram Coffin
"Trees" - Nelda Dishman

"Water-Front Streets - Langston Hughes
"What Makes A Poem" - Eve Merriam
"Wind-Wolves" - William D. Sargent

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